



A Different Strummer

Blue Water Ramblers featured at March 28 FolkSide Coffeehouse

Interview by Bill Cohen



Some of you may remember the Blue Water Ramblers from last year's Central Ohio Folk Festival. They are, from left to right: Bear Berends (Guitar, Vocals); Marten Van Eyk (Fiddle) and Banjo Jim Foerch (Banjo, Harmonica & Vocals). We invite you to come out to see them on March 28! Want a preview? Visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=PFXzanhvdpw <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tM5gClkf4KE>

Bill Cohen: The Blue Water Ramblers appeared at last year's Central Ohio Folk Festival, but still, some of our members have never seen you perform. So tell us: how do you describe the kind of music you play and sing?

Bear Berends: Extraordinary Folk Music – kind of interesting, when the words “folk music” became *persona-non-grata* in the 80's and 90's, both Banjo-Jim and I never wavered from describing ourselves as folkies or playing folk music. I/we always saw it as a badge of honor!

Jim Foerch: As Bear said, we play extraordinary folk music, meaning we are just regular working stiffs who like to comment on our lives – real and fantasy – through music.

Marten Van Eyk: The Blue Water Ramblers sing straight from the heart about the kind of things the common person on the street concern themselves with. Real music, real issues, for real people!

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After School Music Program sponsored by Columbus Folk Music Society

by D. Boston

As our readers may or may not be aware, the CFMS has embarked on another music outreach program teaching music classes at an after school facility on the near west side of Columbus. Titled “Run the Race Club”, the after school program was founded in 2005 by Rachel Muha. CFMS member Joe Baringhaus discovered the program and suggested it might become a good fit for the talents that CFMS members have to offer. In addition to formal musical instruction the CFMS is coordinating, some of our musicians periodically sing and jam with the kids.

On September 23 of 2014, a 6-week series on basic percussive rhythms kicked off the program. The kids, ranging from 7 to 12 years old, utilized 5



gallon plastic buckets turned on their ends and some large red wooden drumsticks. They learned basic rhythm patterns and even some polyrhythms. At the end of the series, a few CFMS musicians sat in on the class and the kids had the opportunity to put their new found skills into practice.

On January 21 of this year, another 6-week series began and focused on learning the tin whistle and some basic, simple melodies. This series engaged the older middle and high school students who seem eager to learn. By the end of

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Blue Water - from page 1

Bill: How did you get into folk music in the first place? Give us a little history of your involvement.

Bear: We all started pickin' and singin' during the 60's folk movement concentrating on the songs of the Civil Rights, Anti-war and Union movements – then throw in a little Guthrie, Seeger, Dylan, Paxton, Kingston Trio, Chad Mitchell as well as Peter, Paul & Mary, and we had a pretty good folk music cocktail ready to go.

Jim: Peter, Paul & Mary, the Kingston Trio, Limelighters, New Christie Minstrels knocked me out as a teenager. When I got to college we sang the current folk hits every evening after dinner. I didn't want to be the 17th guitar so I bought a banjo on Nov. 5, 1965.

Marten: I'm an immigrant from the Netherlands. My dad, in his attempt to confirm to the family we left behind that we were doing well in the USA, started me on the violin, which was considered back in the Netherlands to be a sign of being "cultured". I learned to play classically but my dad wanted me to also play without sheet music. In 1962, when I was 10 years old, he would have me practice in his wood shop and play along with the radio. I listened to many folk songs as well as Gospel. It taught me to improvise and play in whatever key the analog radio station was putting out!

Bill: Has your involvement in folk music and your viewpoint of it changed over the years? If so, how?

Bear: The songs are less topical and events driven than when we started – "folkies" as purveyors of societal truths have gone by the wayside as popular music began to decline to take on the topics of the day. It's not that music doesn't have as many societal ills to comment on or raise attention to – it's just that it doesn't sell anymore. Folks don't seem to want to be bothered by "societies' child" anymore!

Jim: As Pete Seeger pointed out, it's ALL folk music. Chimps don't do it, whales don't do it, birds don't do it: *folks* make music. I think of the genre labeled "folk music" as a bit simpler, a bit less technological (despite my electric banjo and stomp boxes), and rather more immediately accessible.

Marten: I came back to folk music after my college orchestra days, when I tired

of being asked repeatedly, ". . . and with whom did you study?". In college, I had a chance to play a genuine "Stradivarius" violin, valued at over a million dollars. I took a chance and played "Yakity Sax" on it, even though I was expected to play something that Beethoven, or the like, had composed! I think that's when I



started leaving my "classical roots" behind!

Bill: What kind of music did you listen to as a child, and did that impact the kind of music you play today? Who are your musical influences?

Bear: My first album that my mother let me buy in grade school was "The White Album" – no, not the Beatles' White Album but Peter, Paul & Mary's "Album". I learned to play all the old folk songs with the first four Peter, Paul & Mary albums during high school. My second mentor – right after college – was the music of John Prine with his basic 3 chords and out strategy.

Jim: Burl Ives, the creep who ratted to the McCarthy witch hunt [people], Gene Autry and Roy Rogers and Dale Evans.

Marten: I started out, and continued for many years playing classical music. My dad had me practice playing along with the radio and most of that music was Gospel. While in college, I became more exposed to folk music, which I learned to love for its simplicity of expression.

Bill: When you perform, do you have a particular goal? Are you striving for entertainment? Or educating audiences about particular events? Or trying to spark some emotion?

Bear: All of the above – we trust our evening in Columbus with you good

folks will have elements of all three. If that happens then we've been successful in our set list preparation!

Jim: We are entertainers. Even when we sing our social commentary songs we hope people will hear the truths and leave their politics behind. (N.B. Doesn't always work. ;>)

Marten: I strive probably for all of the above! My chief goal is to connect with my audience.

Bill: What do you see as the future of folk music in this country? Will it die out as older people, some of the biggest fans of folk, also die?

Bear: Folk music will be around as long as there are folks to write, play and sing it. Maybe not in the classic 50's/60's style of sparse instrumentation and tight harmonies, but certainly in at least it's ability to be meaningful if "folkies" wish to deliver the goods. It certainly seems that the latest folk wave of 20-something's are adding a lot of rhythm and percussion to the genre. That may be where it's headed, but I personally find it distracting and not necessary. That being said, God bless the youngin's for keeping the music alive at least!

Jim: It's changing, it's evolution, there will be revivals, there will be young rebels, it will be quaint, it will be the next cool thing. There will always be young folks who love the clean honesty of a banjo and an Appalachian co-dependent love song.

Marten: I believe Folk Music is here to stay because it is able to express the thoughts and beliefs of the common person. I see plenty of young people learning to play these stringed instruments and learning to play these "straight from the heart" songs!

Details of *Blue Water Rambler's* upcoming performance:

When: Saturday, March 28

Where: FolkSide Coffeehouse held at the Columbus Mennonite Church, 35 Oakland Park Ave, Columbus

Time: 8:00 p.m. performance

Preceded by:

6pm Open Jam; 7pm Open Mic

Additional details can be found under "Save the Date", pg. 5.

After School- from page 1

the second class, they were playing simple melodies together on the whistle!

The facility has a dedicated music room which we utilize and the room also houses various (donated) instruments with varying levels of functionality.

A committee of 5 CFMS members was established by the CFMS to help coordinate the program. They plan to conduct one more 6 week series that will finish out the school year and then break for the summer but will hold informal occasional sing/jams with the kids during the summer break. The summer jams began last summer and



the kids were eager to participate. Frequently they asked when the next "jam" would be. By fall of 2015, we are hoping to engage an OSU intern student to help further shape, develop

and give direction to the instructional part of the program.

Music programs are no longer part of many public school curriculums. Programs of instruction in music and the arts have been shown in many studies to have significant positive effects in childhood development and



even school performance. "Dr. James Catterall of UCLA has analyzed the school records of 25,000 students as they moved from grade 8 to grade 10. He found that the students who studied music and the arts had higher grades, scored better on standardized tests, had better attendance records and were more active in community affairs than other students. He also found that students from poorer families who studied arts improved overall school performance more rapidly than all other students." (Catterall, UCLA, Fall 1997). These benefits are in addition to the benefits we all know and love:

learning to play music is fun, teaches teamwork and gives the enjoyable reward of an acquired lifelong skill.

The committee's intention is to build an ongoing program of music instruction that will also eventually include guitar and fiddle, as well as song. It may even be possible to have the kids help construct their own instruments out of cigar boxes and, with some additional help from professionals for the details, craft a small guitar or even fiddle they can enjoy learning to play.

These types of events reflect an important part of CFMS' activities and your donations can help keep them alive. If you are a musician and are interested in helping us in the teaching part of the program, please e-mail: dboston2@columbus.rr.com. Likewise, if you wish to make a donation to the CFMS to help us fund our efforts, checks can be made payable to CFMS and mailed to P.O. Box 20735, Columbus, OH 43220 or you can snag one of the officers of the board at an event and make the donation directly.

You are also welcome to attend any of the jams with the kids and come see for yourself what is happening! We will post the jam notices under the calendar section of the newsletter as they occur.

Some Basics & Tips for Your Instrument – A Reminder

Editor's Note: This is a reprinted excerpt from an article we previously published in the July, 2014 issue of "A Different Strummer."

Dry Air

"When air humidity is high, wood tends to expand. When the air gets too dry, it'll shrink. Sudden humidity changes and low air humidity are among a guitar's worst enemies. If the wood gets too dry, the braces or the bridge may come loose, the top may crack, or frets (which don't shrink) may jut out from the sides of the neck (which does)."¹

Jason Fowler adds to the list: "Too much or too little humidity can upset the moisture balance in your guitar causing a host of undesirable effects including loss of tone, action too high or too low, wood shrinkage or expansion, finish checking, finish roughness, top distortions, cracks, etc." Fortunately, there are some pretty simple remedies.

Hygrometers

The Tipbook relays, "when it comes to air humidity, guitars and people are quite similar: both like it to be around 50% to 60%. You can check the level of air humidity with a hygrometer,



available for some fifteen dollars or more.

Guitar humidifiers

"Central heating and air conditioning are two of the main causes of dry air. There are all kinds of small affordable humidifiers that can be used inside the guitar case; some are designed to be installed in the sound hole of the instrument. Also, there are cases that have built-in humidifiers, or even a hygrometer or thermometer."²

Fowler adds: "These units [guitar humidifiers] only do what they are supposed to do when the guitar is

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Library System Boasts Folk CD Collection

Remember the wealth of materials that our local library system has and, in particular, check out (literally and figuratively) some of the CDs in the folk music collection. Here's just a sampling of the many CD titles found in the library system:

"Back Roads to Cold Mountain" (Smithsonian Folkways) (2004)

"My Name is Buddy" Ry Cooder (2007)

"Broken Hearts and Dirty Windows" John Prine (2010)

"O Brother Where Art Thou?" (Motion picture soundtrack) (2011)

"The Harrow & The Harvest" Gillian Welch (2011)

"Woody at 100 - The Woody Guthrie Centennial Collection" Woody Guthrie (2012)

"Another Self Portrait" Bob Dylan (2013)

"Sing Out America! The Best of Pete Seeger" Pete Seeger (2014)

"Bela Fleck & Abigail Washburn" (Bela Fleck) 2014

AND, to support member Tom Nagel's recent efforts in working with the Grandview Library to acquire some new folk CD titles, please check out:

"Bird in a House" (Railroad Earth) (2002)

"Other Voices, Other Rooms" (Nancy Griffith) (1993)

"The Best of Tom Paxton - I can't help but wonder where I'm bound" (Tom Paxton) 1999

All you need to do is go to <http://www.columbuslibrary.org>, enter the search words "folk music united states", search out the titles you're interested in, and hit the "Place request". It's as simple as that! (You need to know your library card number as well). Oh, they have books too.



Library Sign

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF SELMA CIVIL RIGHTS MARCH – SPARKS MARCH 6 PROGRAM OF FREEDOM SONGS & MEMORIES



When civil rights activists faced the threat of snarling police dogs, beatings, jail cells, and sometimes even death, they often emboldened themselves by singing simple freedom songs.

Friday March 6, we'll recall that era, 1960-65, when blacks and whites sang together, marched together, were beaten together, and were sometimes killed together as they campaigned for simple human rights, now taken for granted.

"Songs of Struggle," with local musicians Paisha Thomas and Bill Cohen, will rekindle the spirit-filled tunes of that era. Among them: *Oh Freedom, Keep Your Eyes on the Prize*, and *I'm on my Way to the Freedom Land*.

The songs will punctuate vintage film footage of some of the major events of the early civil rights movement. Among them: the 1960 lunch counter sit-ins, the 1961 freedom rides, the 1963 March on Washington and the Birmingham church bombing, the June 1964 murder of 3 civil rights workers in Mississippi, and the 1965 marches from Selma.

"We're doing this on the 50th anniversary of the first Selma-to-Montgomery March, known as Bloody Sunday, because Alabama troopers and police beat and trampled dozens of demonstrators before they even began their march for equal voting rights," says Cohen. "But we also want to recall all the other struggles before that, struggles made possible by thousands of so-called ordinary people, who had the courage to take extraordinary risks for freedom."

This unique program will take place at the North Baptist Church, 76 E. Charleston, just off North High Street, a few blocks North of Morse Road. The event will run from 7 - 8:30 pm.

"Songs of Struggle" is sponsored by Church Women United, a coalition of women from several Christian denominations, united in their dedication to peace and social justice. Admission to the program is free, but donations will be welcomed, with proceeds going to the group's many projects.

For more information, call Bill at 614-263-3851.



SAVE THE DATE . . .

 The **Saturday Music Jam** at the **Worthington Farmers' Market** **9:30 - 11:30 a.m.** – every Saturday at *The Shops at Worthington* mall (the location of the market and jam during the winter months). All are welcome to play. Consider bringing a chair.

 **Saturday, March 28:**
FolkSide Coffeehouse featuring

Blue Water Ramblers
6 p.m. Open Jam
7-8 p.m. Open Mic
8 p.m.: Blue Water Ramblers.
Held at the *Columbus Mennonite Church*, 35 Oakland Park Avenue (just East of High St. & one block North of E.N. Broadway), Cols, OH. \$7.00 donation; Students \$5.00; CFMS members \$5.00;

under 12 free.

 **Saturday, April 4: Benefit Concert for the Central Ohio Folk Festival.** Benefit will be held at the *Shamrock Club*, 60 W. Castle Rd, Columbus, 43207. Details forthcoming.

Turning Plastic Junk into Beautiful Glowing Art



CFMS member Randi Cohen has been saving her plastic

gallon milk jugs ever since last May – for good reason. She knows they're needed for the beautiful *luminaria* display that will cap off the Saturday night May 2nd concert at this year's Central Ohio Folk Festival.

Dozens of the candle-holders will light the way for concert-goers to walk back to their cars following this traditional breathtaking highlight of the festival. The jugs Randi has saved won't be enough on their own. That's why she's reminding all CFMS members and friends to save their jugs so that *luminaria* coordinator Joe Baringhaus can create this beautiful display.

Jugs can be brought either to the coffeehouse or dropped off at the home of Linda McDonald, 444 Oakland Park Avenue, Columbus.

Coffee cans with plastic lids are also needed (for the children's craft program) – they make excellent little drums.

Don't forget:

The **March Coffeehouse** will host our **annual live auction (& bake sale)** - which benefits the Central Ohio Folk Festival. There are bound to be some nice items to bid on. Come early and check them out before the festivities begin.



If you have more quality items you wish to contribute to the live auction, please drop them off at the home of Linda McDonald (444 Oakland Park Ave.) at least 2 weeks prior to the March 28 coffeehouse. Questions? Call Sharon or Art at 614-491-0437.

FOLLOWING OUR OWN . . .

Friday, March 6: "Songs of Struggle – 50 Years after the Selma to Montgomery March" **7 - 8:30 p.m.** (*Bill Cohen and Paisha Thomas*). *North Baptist Church*, 76 E. Charleston, Columbus, 43214. Sponsored by Church Women United. Free Admission; donations encouraged. For more info, call Bill at: 614-263-3851.

Sunday, March 29: Social Action Song Swap – 1- 3 p.m. (hosted by Joanie Calem & Leslie Zak). If you are a musician and have songs you would like to share or if you are a music fan and have songs that you would like to sing along with, come along! And if you just feel like listening, come along as well! Run as a "Round Robin"

with everyone getting a chance to share a song as we go around the room. *Northwood High Building*, 2231 N. High St, Artspace Rm. 100. Questions? Contact Joanie at: jcalem@columbus.rr.com

Bluegrass Jam Etiquette ('The Jammandments')



by Carl Yaffey

1. Tune thine instrument well, and tune it often with thine electric tuner, lest the sounds emanating from thine instrument be unclean.

2. Thou shalt arrange thyself in a small circle so that thou mayest hear and see the other musicians. Thou shalt listen with thine ears to the songs and attempt to play in accord with the group; also, open thine eyes betimes to look about thee, lest there be some visual sign someone is endeavoring to send thee. Thou shalt play softly when someone lifteth his voice in song, when playing harmony, and when thou knowest not what thou is doing.

3. Thou shalt commence and cease playing each tune together as one, so that the noise ye make be a joyful

noise, and not a heinous tinkling that goeth in fits and starts, for that is unclean, and is an abomination.

Whensoever a musician sticketh forth his foot as though he were afflicted with a cramp in the fatted calf, thou must complete the rest of that verse, and then cease.

4. Thou shalt stick out thine own foot or else lift up thy voice crying "this is it!", or "last time!" if thou hast been the one to begin the song, and it has been played sufficient times over.

5. Thou shalt communicate who has the next solo.

6. Thou shalt welcome others.

7. Thou shalt share in the selection.

8. Thou shalt try new stuff.

9. Thou shalt let others know when you are not jamming but are rehearsing.

10. Thou shalt not raid (calling out thine favorite musicians from an active jam to make another).

11. Thou shalt not ever forsake the beat. Thou shalt not speed.

12. If thou dost not truly knoweth the song, backeth thou off with thine volume.

13. Be not the 4th, 5th, nor 6th voice in a trio, nor doubleth the melody in a bluegrass song verily i say to you, the bluegrass was not created for choral singing.

14. Thou shalt chop from time to time to maintaineth timing within the jam. Do not the heathen rock and rollers do as much?

15. Announceth the title of thy tune before beginning so that others may have time to ponder chord changes and capo position.

16. Caseth not thine instrument in anger. Maketh some lame excuse about thy spouse and depart with a bright countenance between songs.

17. Thou shalt not perform two slow songs or syrupy waltzes in a row nor repeat a song already done to demonstrate thine own fashion.

18. Heed carefully the advice and lore of the old ones. You would not be there without them.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS:



Steve Ball (new)

Jacquie Pisuario (new)

Catherine Bister (new)

Judith Swabby

John & Elizabeth Clear (new)

Mary Vietmeier (new)

Martha Gostely/
Steven Ennis (new)

Jennie and
Donald Newton

Mystery Photo

Well, this one might not be so hard to guess. Nevertheless you'll find out who it is in the April issue.



How can I find out more about the Columbus Folk Music Society and/or its events?

Visit us at:

www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org

OR you can join us as a member. Benefits include: camaraderie with the folkies in town, discounts on certain admissions, this monthly newsletter and the comfort of knowing that all events are family friendly! A membership form is provided on the last page of this newsletter.

2015 Bob Kirby Scholarship Award - Application Deadline March 10 !

The Columbus Folk Music Society established the Bob Kirby Scholarship Memorial Fund in memory of Bob Kirby in 2009. The purpose of the fund is to provide support to young musicians from Central Ohio by offering monetary awards to be used to enhance musical skills in the folk music tradition. Recipients may use the award to purchase an instrument, take music lessons, attend music workshops, etc.

Recipients also have the opportunity to pursue greater knowledge of and appreciation for the folk music tradition by attending workshops and concerts at the Central Ohio Folk Festival.

The application process is open to students in grades 3-12. Basic application requirements include: completing the application form and submitting a letter explaining interest in folk music, musical experience, and what musical instrument applicant plays or is interested in playing. A singing voice does qualify as an instrument! All applications will be reviewed and the top 5 applicants interviewed.

Deadline for submission of applications is March 10, 2015. The award will be announced and awarded at the Central Ohio Folk Festival at the beginning of May.

An application form and cover letter explaining the program can be found on the CFMS website at the bottom of the page at this link: www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org/Bob_Kirby.html.

Also, if you know someone who might be interested in this scholarship opportunity, please pass on the information!

Questions concerning the Kirby Scholarship can be directed to Linda McDonald at lindamcdonald@columbusfolkmusicsociety.org.



Basics & Tips - from page 3

stored in its case. If you like to keep your guitar out then you are going to have to invest in a room humidifier and a hygrometer in order to monitor the room where the guitar is kept. You can discontinue these humidification procedures as soon as it warms up outside and you start opening windows and turning off your heat at home.”³

Time to Adjust

“If its extremely cold outside, and you take your instrument someplace where it's warm, or vice versa, allow your guitar some time to adjust to the new surroundings before unpacking it. Take it out after fifteen minutes [minimally], or as much longer as you can. The more gradually things change, the better your instrument will like it.

Tips: Never store your guitar in direct sunlight, near heaters or fireplaces, or anywhere else where it may get too hot or too cold. If you hang it from a wall at home, preferably choose an inside wall.”⁴

Fowler adds: “Cool damp basements are out too since as they tend to be too humid. Also, never travel about with your guitar in the trunk of your guitar, winter or summer – the extremes of temperatures in a car’s trunk can cause severe damage to a fragile acoustic guitar.”

Solid Tops

The Tipbook says, “guitars made with laminated tops are less sensitive to all of the above than guitars with solid tops – but take care of those as well.

“Sounds a little excessive? According to experts, about ninety percent of all acoustic guitar problems are related to changes in air humidity or temperature.”⁵

Notes: ¹⁻⁵ Tipbook Acoustic Guitar, The Complete Guide, by Hugo Pinksterboer, pp. 136-140

THE COLUMBUS FOLK MUSIC SOCIETY OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES

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Next Issue in April

We're on the web!

www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org

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Membership renewals are due annually by September 30th. For new members, please check one of the membership levels listed below & pro-rate the amount of your check as indicated. If joining during the month of:

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Aug-Oct: Your membership level amount as listed Nov-Jan: Your membership level amount x .75

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Please send completed form and payment to:
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P.O. Box 20735, Columbus, OH 43220

In an effort to be both fiscally and environmentally responsible, we will send a full-color, interactive newsletter via e-mail unless you request a hard copy be mailed to you.

I enjoy the annual Central Ohio Folk Festival (early May): Lots 5 4 3 2 1 Not (please circle one)